

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7505

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PBOR, JO, IS

SUBJ: MAYORS DENY REPORT ON CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE

FOR WEST BANK

1. OCTOBER 26 EAST JERUSALEM ARABIC NEWSPAPER, AL-QUDS, PUBLISHED STATEMENT BY CHRISIAN MAYORS OF BETHLEHEM, BEIT SAHOUR AND BEIT JALA DENOUCING ALLEGATION THAT WEST BANK CHRISIANS HAD CALLED FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIAN ENCLAVE ON WEST BANK. REPORT, WHICH CAME FROM FRENCH NEW AGENCY, AFP, WAS VIGOROUSLY DENIED BY BETHLEHEM MAYOR FREIJ, BEIT JALA MAYOR AL-ARAJ, AND BEIT SAHOUR MAYOR AL-TAWIL. MAYORS DENIED ANY ATTEMPT HAD BEEN MADE BY ANY WEST BANK CHRISTIANS TO FORM THIS ENTITY. THEY CLAIMED REPORT WAS AIMED AT DIVIDING CHRISTIAN AND MOSLEM COMMUNITIES IN ORDER TO "DIVERT THE PEOPLE FROM THEIR MAIN COURSE" THEY WARNED WEST BANK RESIDENTS NOT TO BE DECEIVEDBY SUCH RUMORS AND ASSURED THEM ARAB SOLIDARITY WAS STILL STRONG.

2. COMMENT. MAYOR AL-ARAJ TOLD US ORIGINAL AFP REPORT WAS IGNORED HERE AS UNFOUNDED BUT PICKED UP IN AMMAN PRESS, CAUSING CONSIDERABLE STIR AMONG RELIGIOUS LEADERS THERE. HE AND OTHER TWO MAYORS AS RESULT CONSIDERED IT IMPORTANT TO PUBLISH

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CATEGORIC STATEMENT OF DENIAL. SOME CHRISTIAN

WEST BANKERS, PARTICULARLY IN THESE THREE COMMUNITIES,
HAVE SOME QUALMS ABOUT THEIR FATE UNDER A RETURN AT SOME
FUTURE DATE TO MOSLEM DOMINATION. AL-ARAJ HAS EVEN SPECULATED
TO US, FOR EXAMPLE, ON THE POSSIBLE INCLUSION OF THE
THREE TOWNS IN AN INTERNATIONALIZED GREATER JERUSALEM AREA.
THESE CHRISTIAN LEADERS, HOWEVER, ARE CERTAINLY NOT LIKELY
AT THIS TIME TO ADVOCATE ANY STEP SUCH AS THE ONE REPORTED
BY AFP WHICH COULD BRING INTO QUESTION THEIR CREDENTIALS AS
LOYAL PALESTINIAN ARABS, STANDING TOGETHER WITH THEIR
MOSLEM BROTHERS AGAINST THE OCCUPATION.
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